A JUXTAPOSITION OF KINDNESS

AMIDST TURMOIL

HAMBURG

1940

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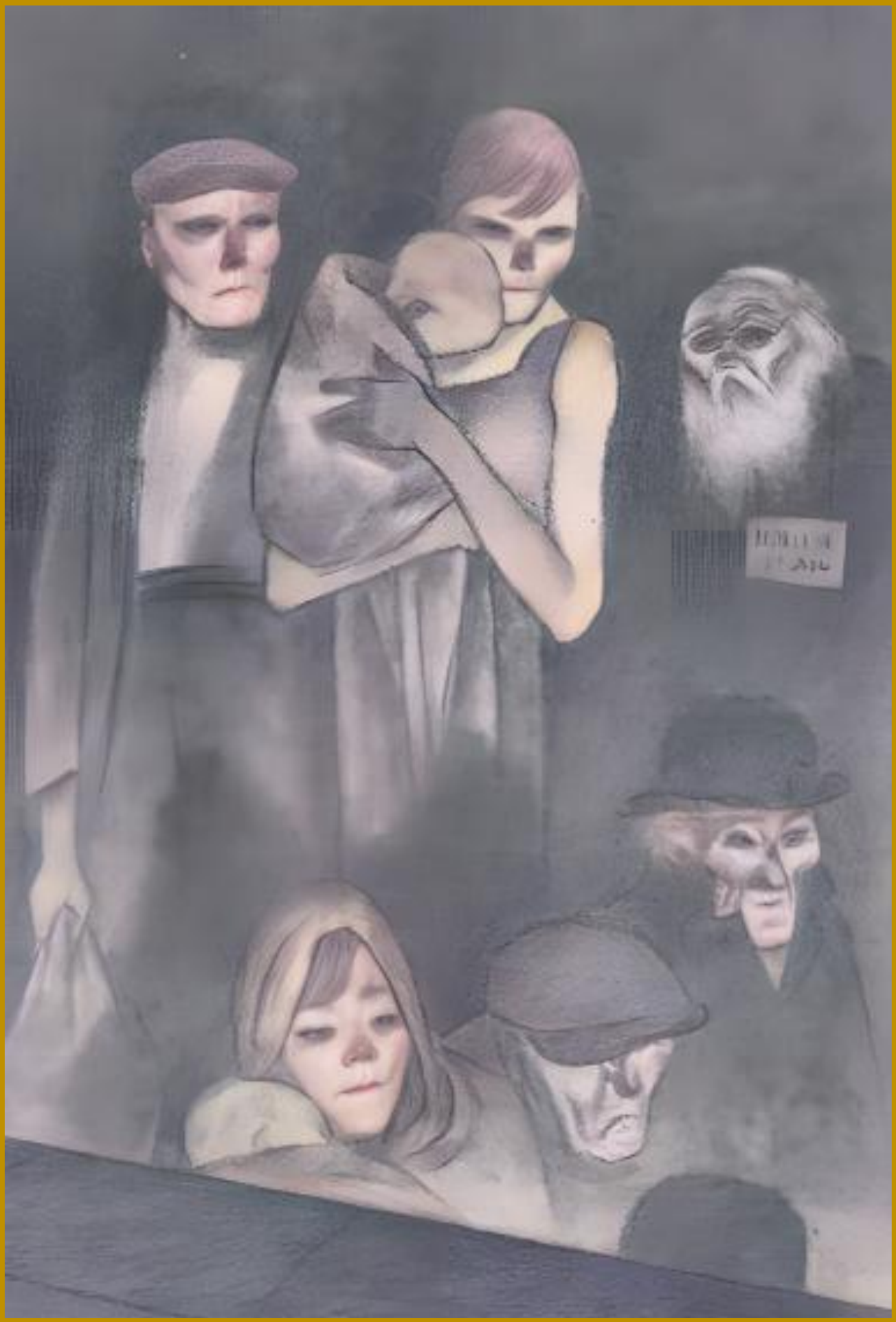
In 1940, the typical resident of Hamburg would assert that life had significantly improved compared to the tumultuous years preceding the Great War.

They would eagerly highlight the bustling department stores, brimming with an array of affordable imported goods that were once a rarity.

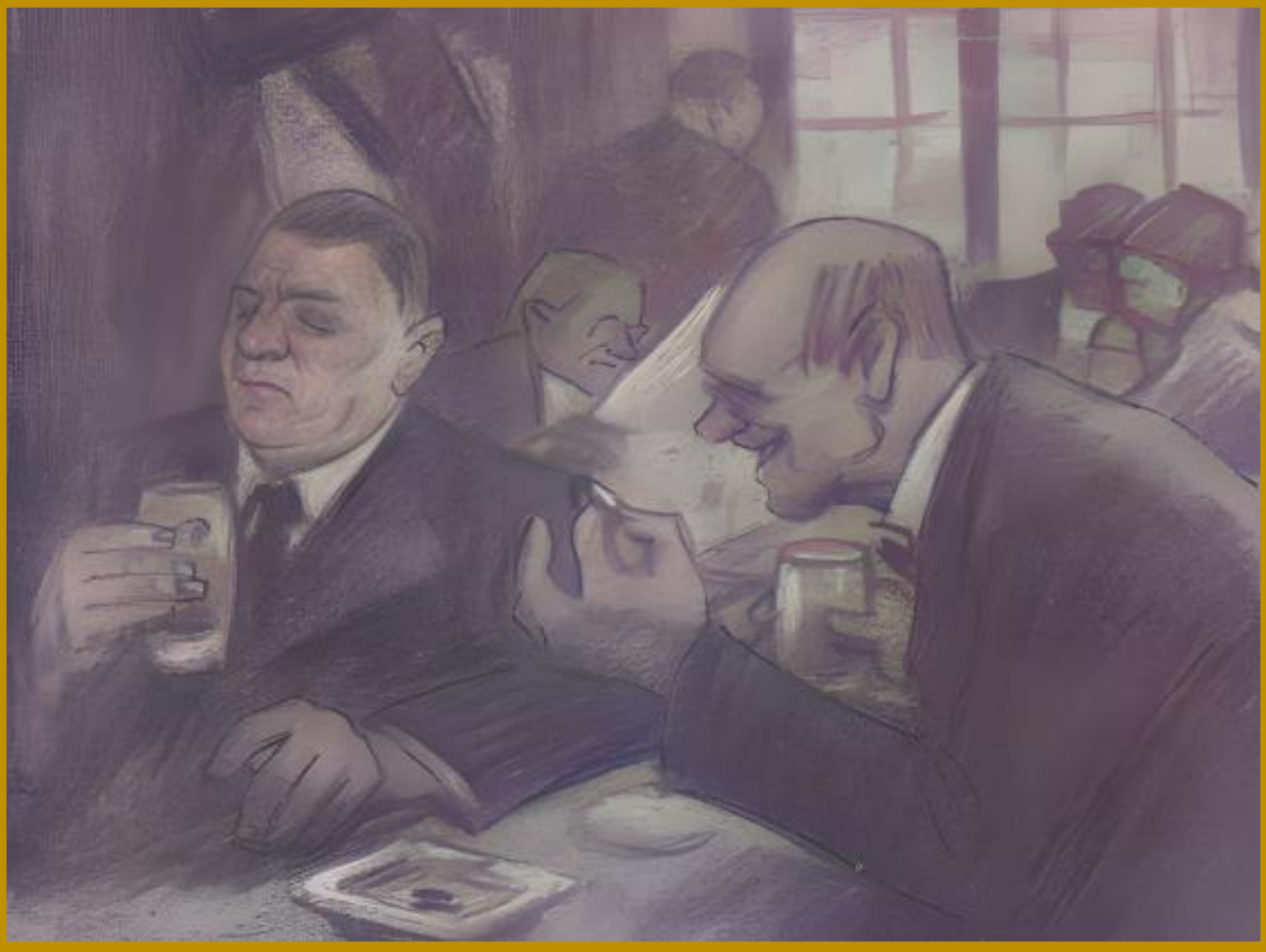
The vibrant nightlife, characterized by lively nightclubs and bustling cafés, thrived as people flocked to enjoy the social scene, a clear indication of the city's revitalization.

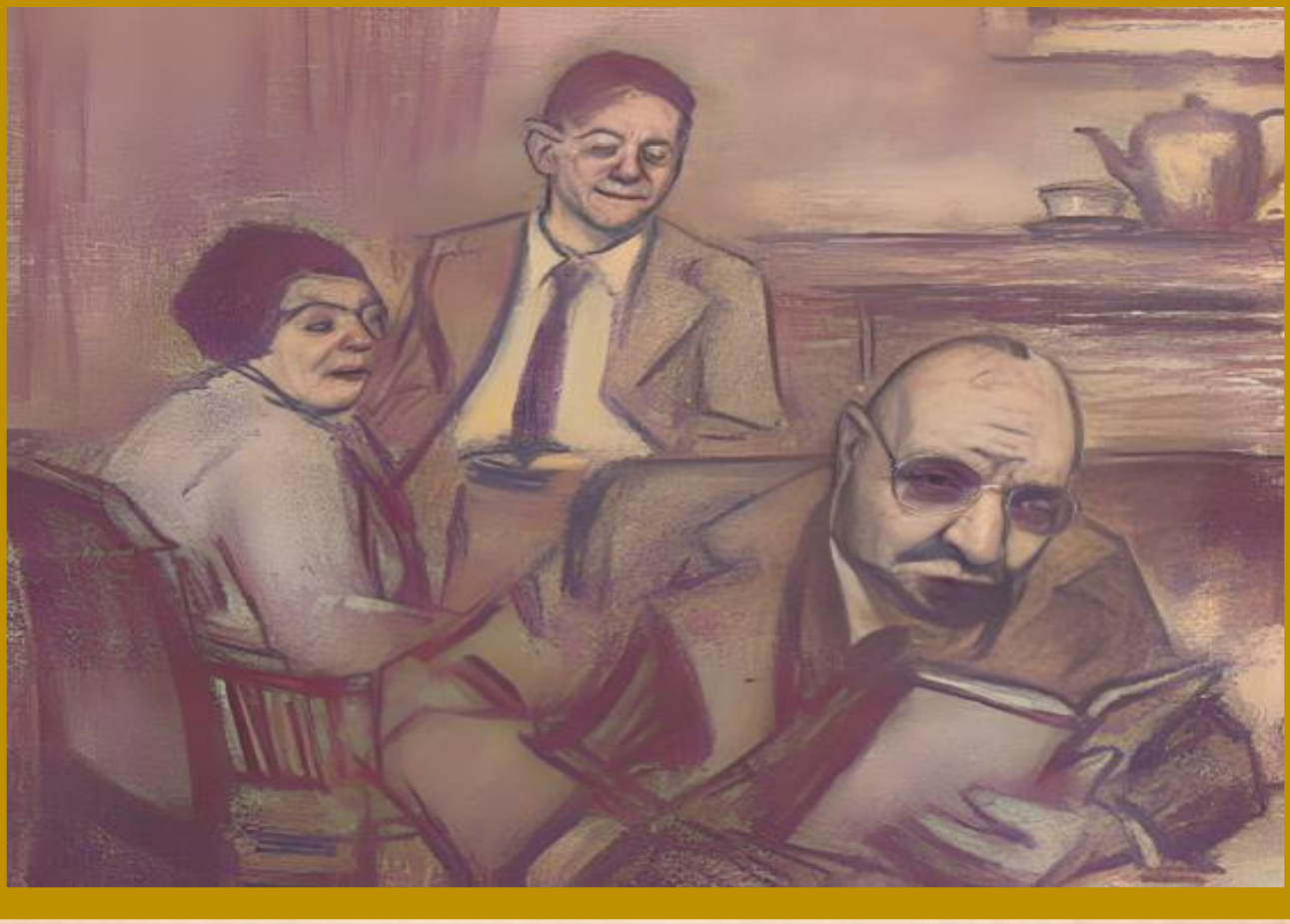
Most notably, there was a palpable sense of pride among the citizens as they carried money that once again held value, a stark contrast to the economic despair



of the Depression years. This resurgence not only reflected a personal financial recovery but also symbolized Germany's broader economic revival, instilling a renewed sense of hope and stability in the hearts of its people.

The bustling boulevards echoed with the sounds of laughter and conversation, now seem





to be reclaiming their vibrancy as people venture out once more. In the bustling streets, most individuals you encounter seem to share a collective sentiment: a palpable sense of returning to normalcy.

This renewed atmosphere allows people to stroll freely, unburdened by the anxiety of encountering

aggressive factions intent on instigating chaos.

Gone are the days when the streets were fraught with the threat of violent confrontations between political extremists, labor activists, and unruly students.

Instead, there is a growing confidence among the populace, who now feel secure

enough to engage in everyday activities without the looming fear of conflict.

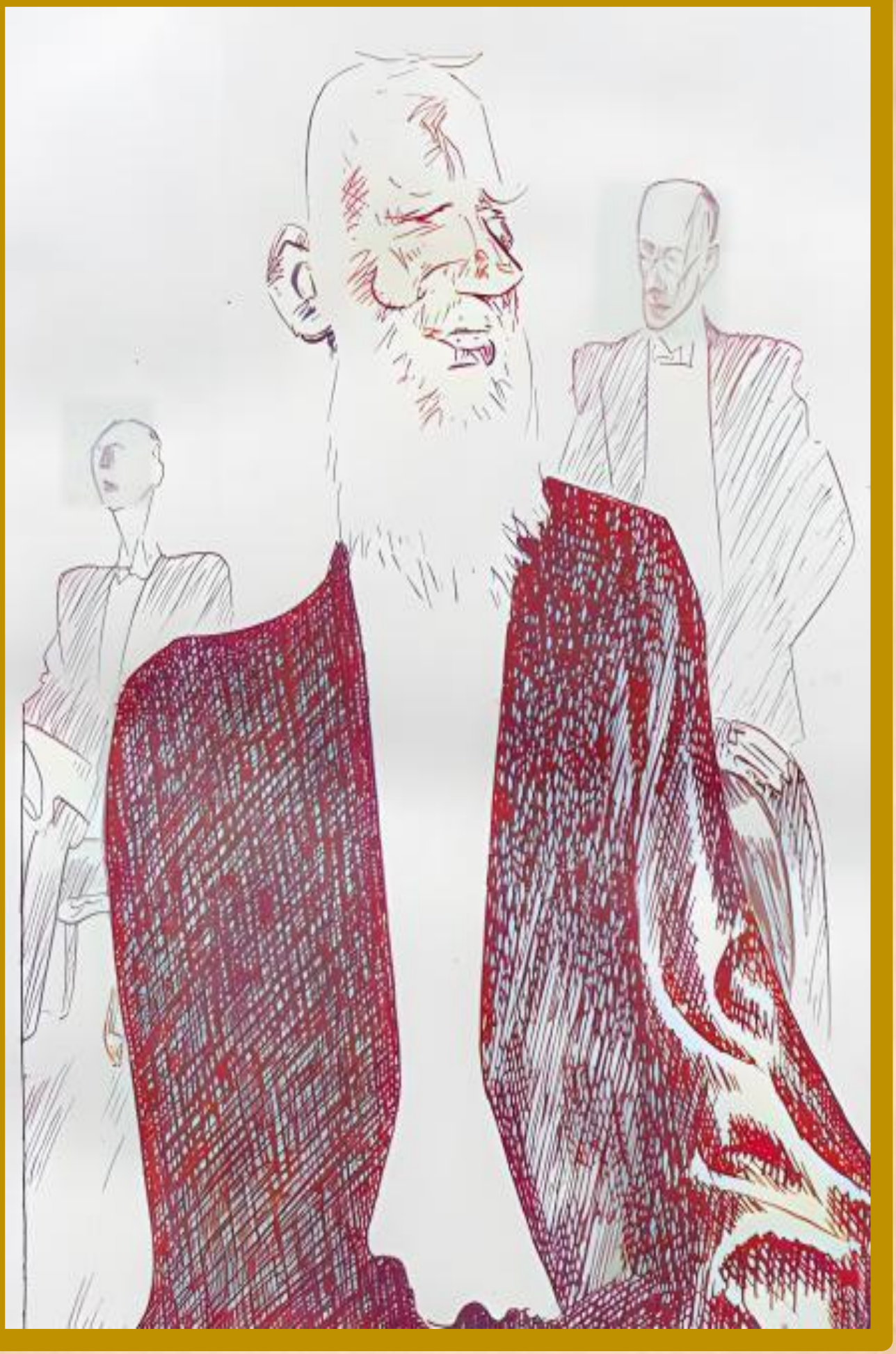
This shift not only reflects a stabilization of societal conditions but also signifies a hopeful resurgence of community spirit, where individuals can once again enjoy the simple pleasure of walking through their neighborhoods without

fear.
The sight of families enjoying ice cream, friends catching up over coffee, and individuals simply taking in the sights reflects a collective sigh of relief. This newfound freedom not only revitalizes the spirit of the community but also fosters a sense of connection among its members, reminding us of the simple joys that

come from being together in shared spaces. As the people of Hamburg navigate this transition, it becomes increasingly clear that the act of walking these streets is not just about physical movement; it symbolizes a deeper yearning for reconnection and the restoration of everyday life.

In many places, even as an outsider or a foreigner, you would often be met with genuine smiles and heartfelt welcomes, regardless of whether you hailed from France or England.
The warmth in their voices conveyed a sense of openness, devoid of any tension or discomfort, as if the complexities of

international relations were a distant concern. It was striking how few seemed to acknowledge the harsh realities of their nation's involvement in a protracted and bitter conflict against those very foreigners. Instead, the atmosphere was filled with a remarkable hospitality that transcended political divides,



allowing for a momentary escape from the weight of war and animosity.

This juxtaposition of kindness amidst turmoil painted a vivid picture of human connection, reminding us that, at the core, people often yearn for understanding and camaraderie, even in the most challenging of circumstances.

For the average citizens

NEUSTE SCHLAGER
PRIMA
KRIEGSONGS

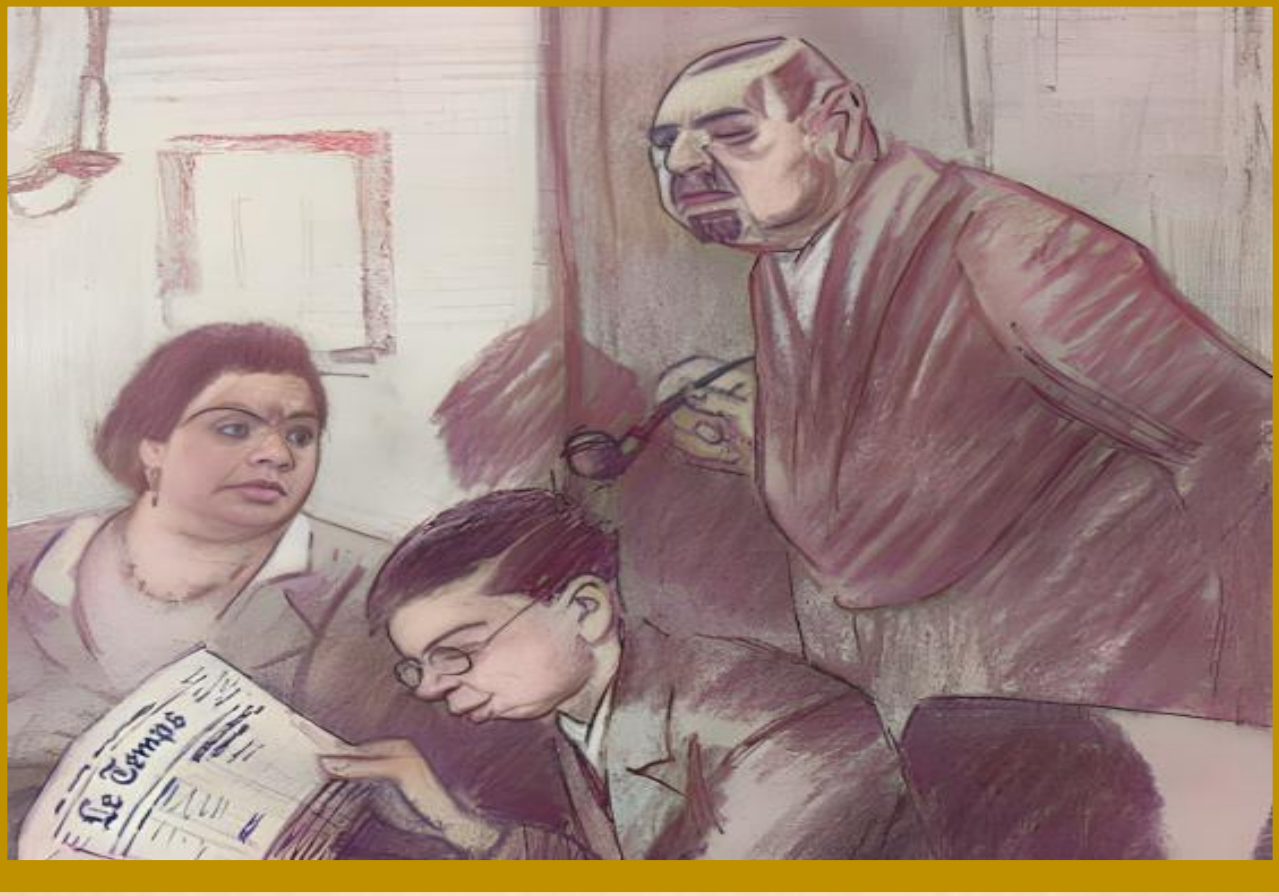
of Hamburg, the war felt like an intangible concept, akin to a menacing storm cloud lingering on the far-off horizon, threatening but not yet realized. Conversations rarely ventured into the depths of its implications; instead, they skimmed the surface, often limited to the occasional mention of a fleeting newspaper

article or snippets of news heard on the radio.

This detachment fostered a sense of complacency, as the gravity of the situation was overshadowed by the daily routines of life. The war, while looming ominously, remained a distant concern, relegated to the background noise of everyday existence,

leaving many to navigate their lives as if the storm would never reach their shores. Many individuals brushed off the situation as mere "politics," confidently asserting that their government was actively addressing the issue and would ultimately resolve the underlying problems, much like it had done with the

Munich Treaty.
This perspective reflects a common tendency to place trust in governmental actions, often overlooking the complexities and nuances of political decisions.
The belief that past agreements and treaties can serve as a reliable blueprint for future resolutions can lead to complacency, as


Le Temps

citizens may fail to recognize the evolving nature of political challenges.
By relying on historical precedents, they may inadvertently ignore the pressing need for proactive engagement and critical analysis of current events, which are essential for fostering genuine progress and ensuring that the lessons of

history are not repeated.
When individuals were compelled to engage in discussions about the war, their discomfort was palpable, reminiscent of a student who has been unexpectedly called upon by a teacher to answer questions on material they had not prepared for.
This unease stemmed

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from a combination of anxiety and vulnerability, as participants grappled with the weight of their own unpreparedness and the gravity of the topic at hand.
Just as a student might fidget or avoid eye contact, those forced into conversation about such a contentious issue often exhibited similar signs of distress,

revealing a deep-seated reluctance to confront the harsh realities of conflict.

The atmosphere became charged with tension, highlighting not only the personal stakes involved but also the broader implications of discussing a subject that many would prefer to avoid.

The question "What about Poland?"

frequently provoked strong negative reactions, particularly among those who had recently fled from Eastern Prussia and other territories lost in the aftermath of the Great War.
This inquiry seemed to strike a deep chord, especially with individuals who had experienced the traumatic upheaval of

being forcibly removed from their farms by nationalist Polish groups.

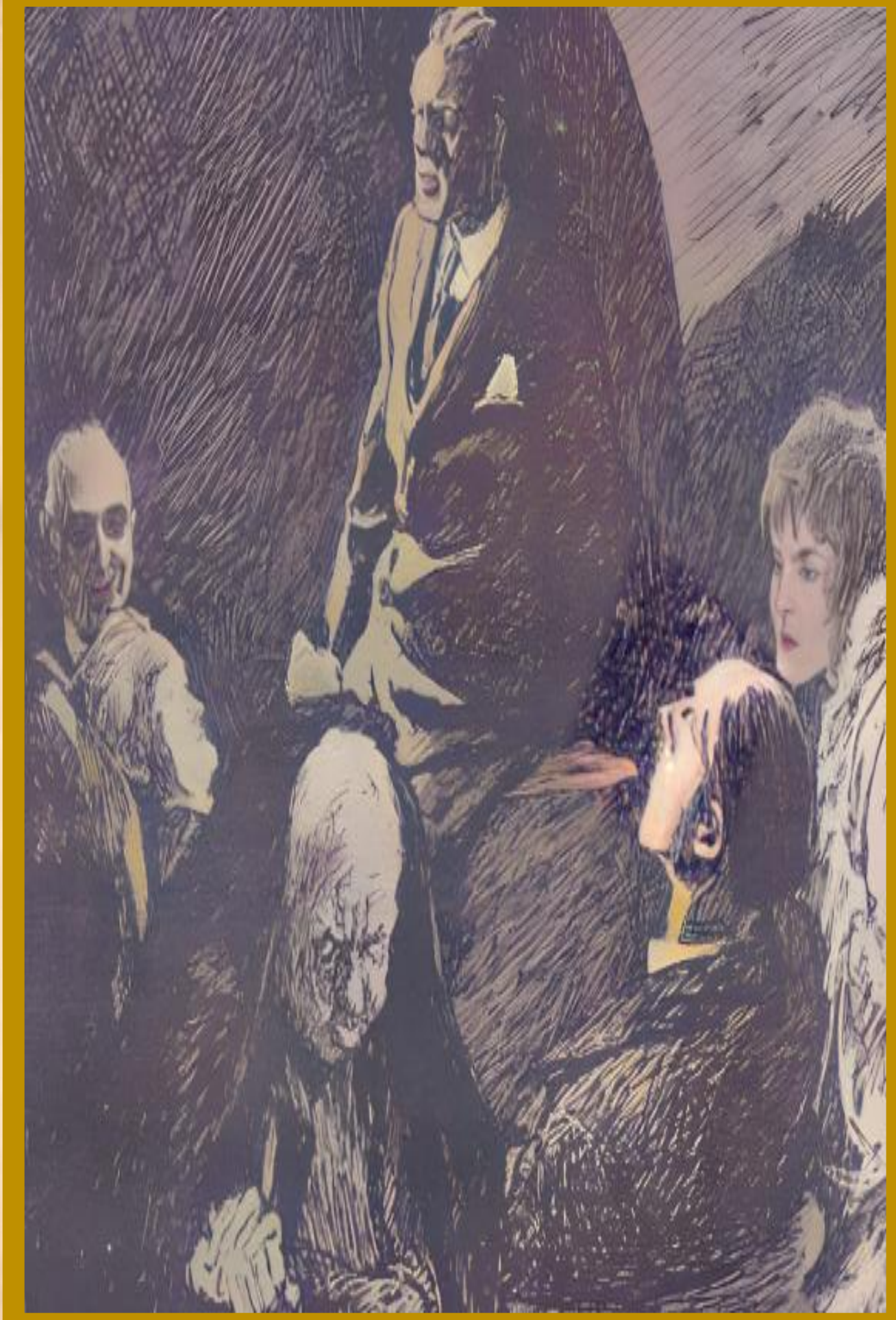
The pain of displacement and the memories of violence were palpable, revealing the profound scars left by conflict and loss. For these individuals, the mention of Poland was not merely a geographical reference; it was a reminder of

their shattered lives and the harsh realities they had endured, making it a topic fraught with emotional weight and historical significance. The prevailing narrative painted the Poles as malevolent thugs, gangsters, and terrorists, who had been relentlessly assaulting peaceful German communities for over a decade since the

conclusion of the war. This portrayal was not merely a reflection of isolated opinions; it was a widespread sentiment that suggested a deep-seated belief among many that the German government had earnestly pursued a peaceful resolution with Poland.

The proposed establishment of an open highway transit

zone aimed to connect Germany with Eastern Prussia, a plan that was met with disdain by the Poles, who, in the eyes of the Germans, rudely rejected this overture for cooperation. This refusal was lamented as a missed opportunity for reconciliation, further entrenching the perception of Polish hostility and



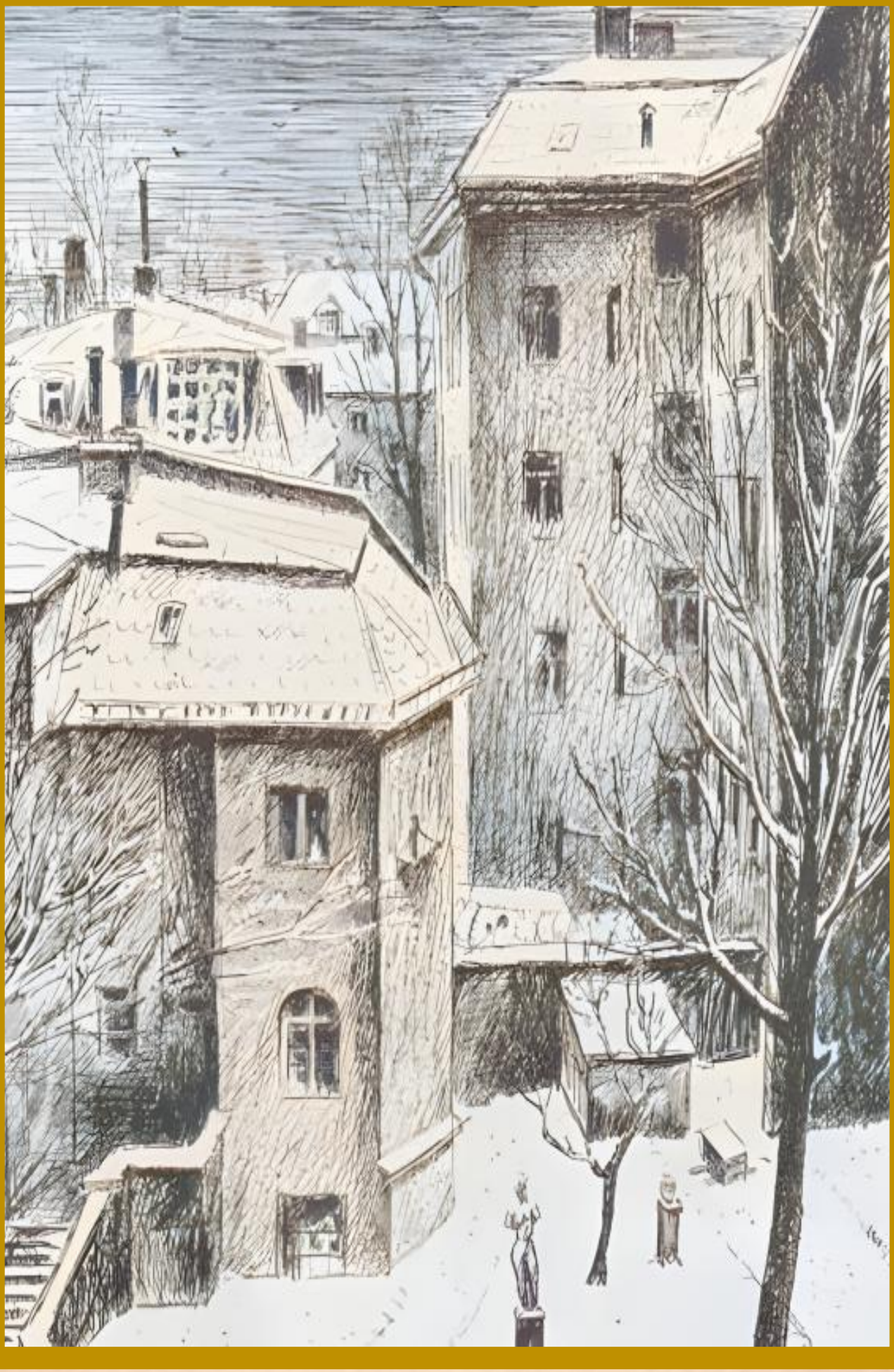
complicating the already fraught relationship between the two nations.

In the midst of a tense discussion, several younger students and factory workers passionately asserted their conviction that the German populace had no desire for another war.

They elaborated on their perspective, arguing

that the government's actions were primarily motivated by the need to protect the significant German minorities residing in territories occupied by Poland, as well as the millions of Germans living in East Prussia.

These individuals pointed to the alarming rhetoric of the ultra-leftist communists within the new Polish



government, who had openly vowed to expel these German communities.
They recalled the chilling statements made by a Polish minister, who had infamously called for the extermination of all Germans who refused to leave, underscoring the urgency of their claims and the dire circumstances faced by

their compatriots.
I was taken back by the realization that it is quite uncommon for students to openly share their opinions on such matters, suggesting that this behavior is not the norm among the current population in Hamburg.
The prevailing sentiment seems to indicate that

discussions about the war are largely absent from the daily conversations of the average office worker, factory employee, or even the young students who one might expect to be more engaged, given the potential impact of the conflict on their lives and aspirations. It is perplexing that, despite the looming threat of war potentially

POSTBRAU

disrupting their dreams of a prosperous future, many appear indifferent.
This indifference raises questions about the broader societal dynamics at play, particularly when considering the adage that young individuals often find themselves fighting in wars instigated by older generations who remain

untouched by the consequences of their decisions.

In my research in Hamburg, I found it quite perplexing that the current students displayed such a disinterest in the escalating war, a sentiment that struck me as unusual from an American perspective. However, upon closer examination, it became

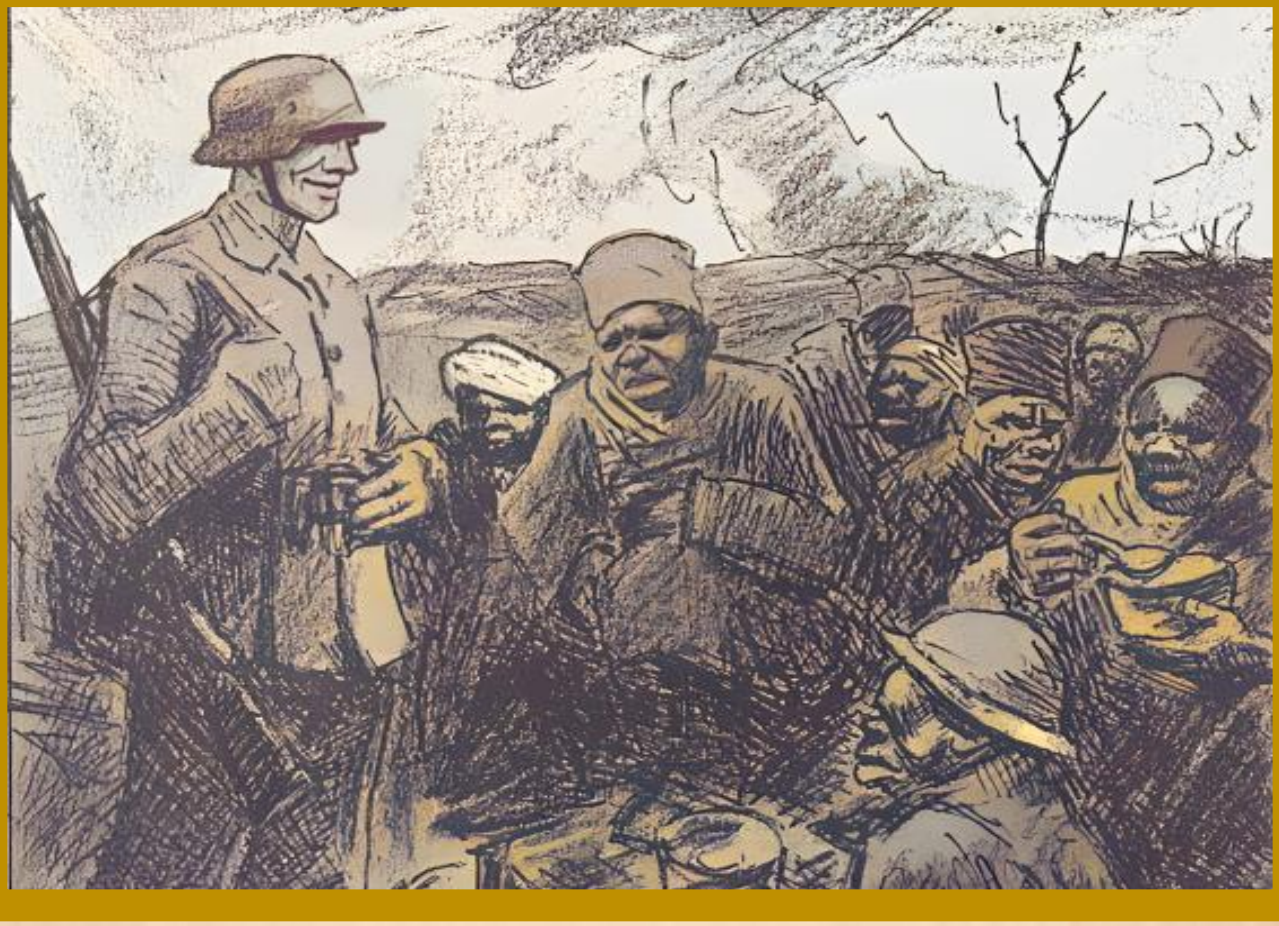
clear that these young individuals were not the same as the rebellious nihilists who had once been the fervent activists during the revolution that dismantled the Kaiser's regime in 1918.
The passionate street fighters who had aligned themselves with the communists to challenge traditional values and authority

had long since faded into history, their fervor extinguished by the harsh realities of the Great Depression, clashes with the authorities, or even their involvement in the Russian Civil War. This new generation, in stark contrast, was primarily focused on pragmatic concerns; they were preoccupied with the pressing need

Liebe
Abend

to graduate and secure stable employment in the booming manufacturing sector. For many, the allure of a comfortable government position was also a significant draw, leaving little room for the ideological battles of the past. The photographs and sketches I am dispatching tonight via diplomatic pouch from

the Cuban Mission vividly illustrate the vibrant life here, where the populace is reveling in the benefits of a steadily improving economic landscape. The sense of stability is palpable, as the citizens go about their daily lives, seemingly untouched by the distant conflicts that their soldiers are engaged in—conflicts



that feel as remote as if they were taking place on Mars.
This stark contrast between the thriving local atmosphere and the ongoing war underscores a remarkable resilience and optimism among the people, who are fully embracing the opportunities that come with this newfound prosperity.

The sentiment among the populace here leans heavily in favor of the government, with many citizens praising its achievements in fostering an economic renaissance that has rekindled a sense of national pride among ordinary Germans. This newfound optimism has inspired the common man to envision a brighter

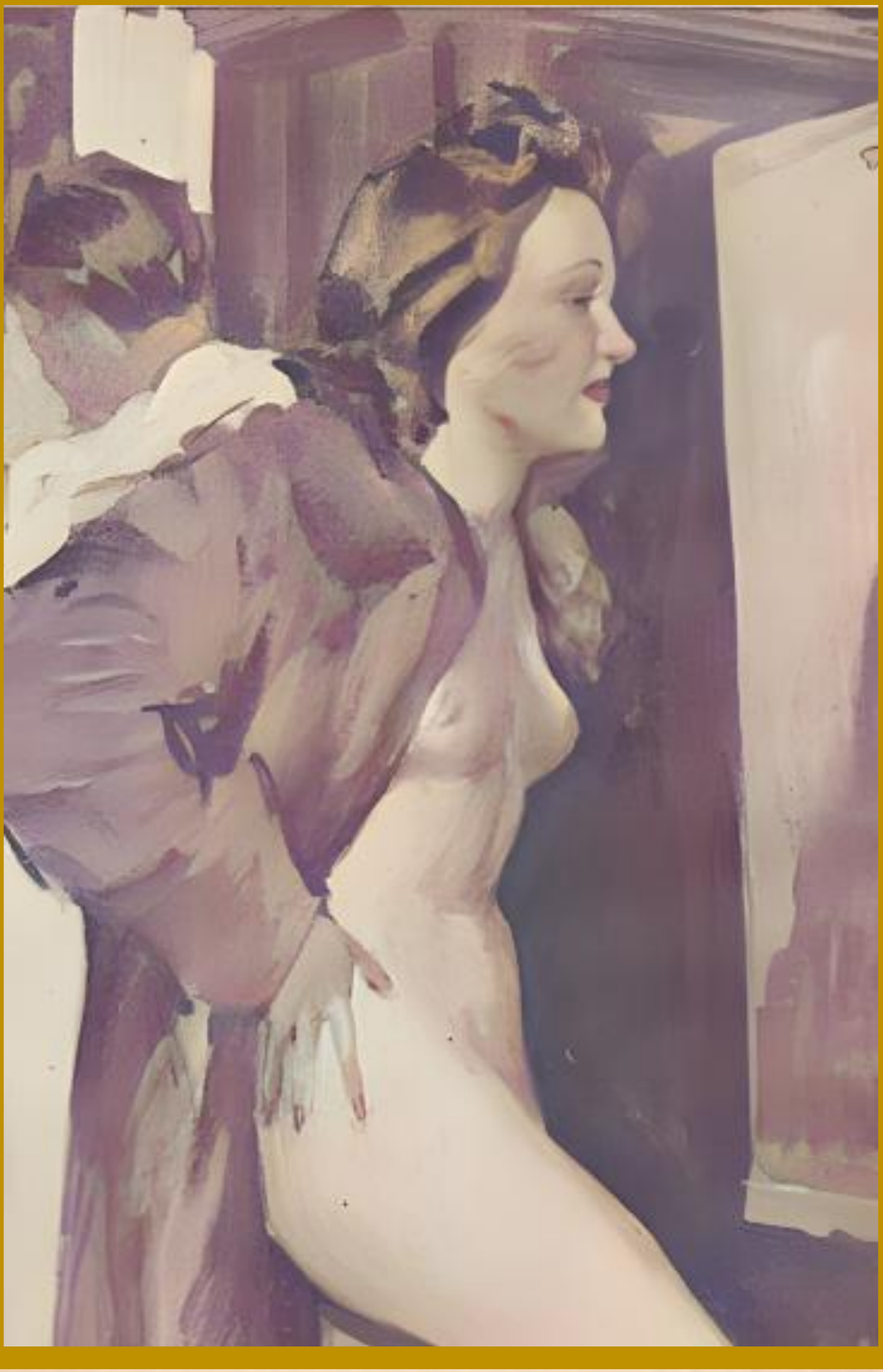
future, aligning with Dr. Gobbles' ambitious dream of a United States of Europe.
In this context, residents of Hamburg express a fervent desire for British Prime Minister Churchill to reconsider his stance and join forces with Germany in its determined fight against the spread of Communism.

The prevailing belief is that such unity could not only strengthen their cause but also pave the way for a more prosperous and secure Europe, one where dreams of a better life are within reach for all. It is evident that the current economic boom has not benefited everyone uniformly, as whispers circulating around the university

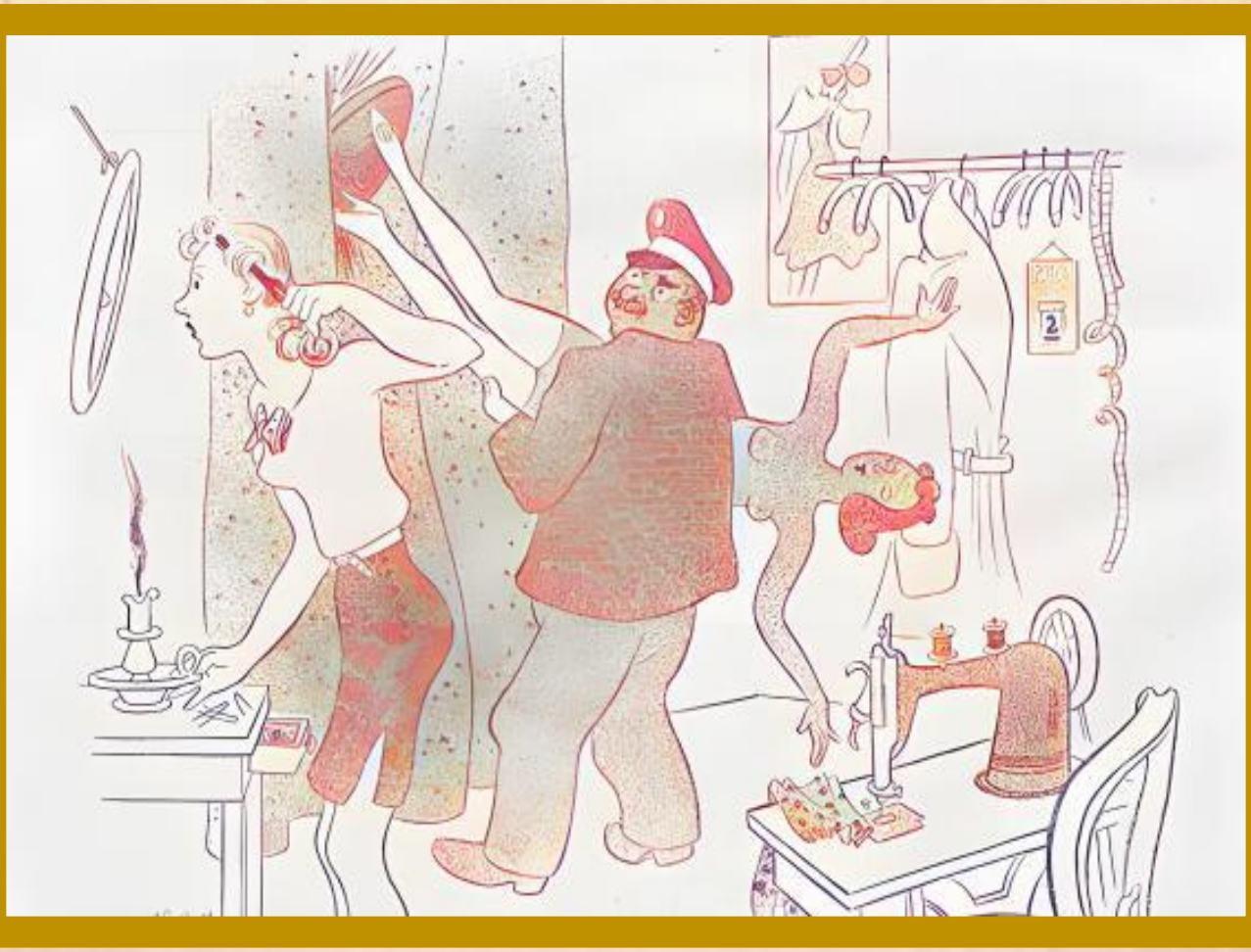
suggest.
These murmurs, often exchanged in hushed tones, allude to late-night police operations targeting local Communist hooligans, along with other undocumented immigrants and individuals deemed social deviants.
This troubling narrative highlights a stark contrast in the

experiences of different community members, revealing that while some may thrive in this prosperous climate, others face increased scrutiny and marginalization. The implications of such disparities are profound, raising questions about the inclusivity of our economic progress and the societal structures

that allow for such inequities to persist. When I inquired about the students' opinions on the recent government initiatives, the majority responded with a nonchalant shrug, expressing a general approval of the efforts to enhance safety on German streets. They acknowledged their dissatisfaction with certain government



actions, noting that some leaders tend to go overboard with their impassioned rhetoric. Despite these reservations, the students maintain a strong belief in the resilience of the German Economic Miracle, trusting that it will ultimately rectify any missteps, particularly those aimed at fostering a safer and more



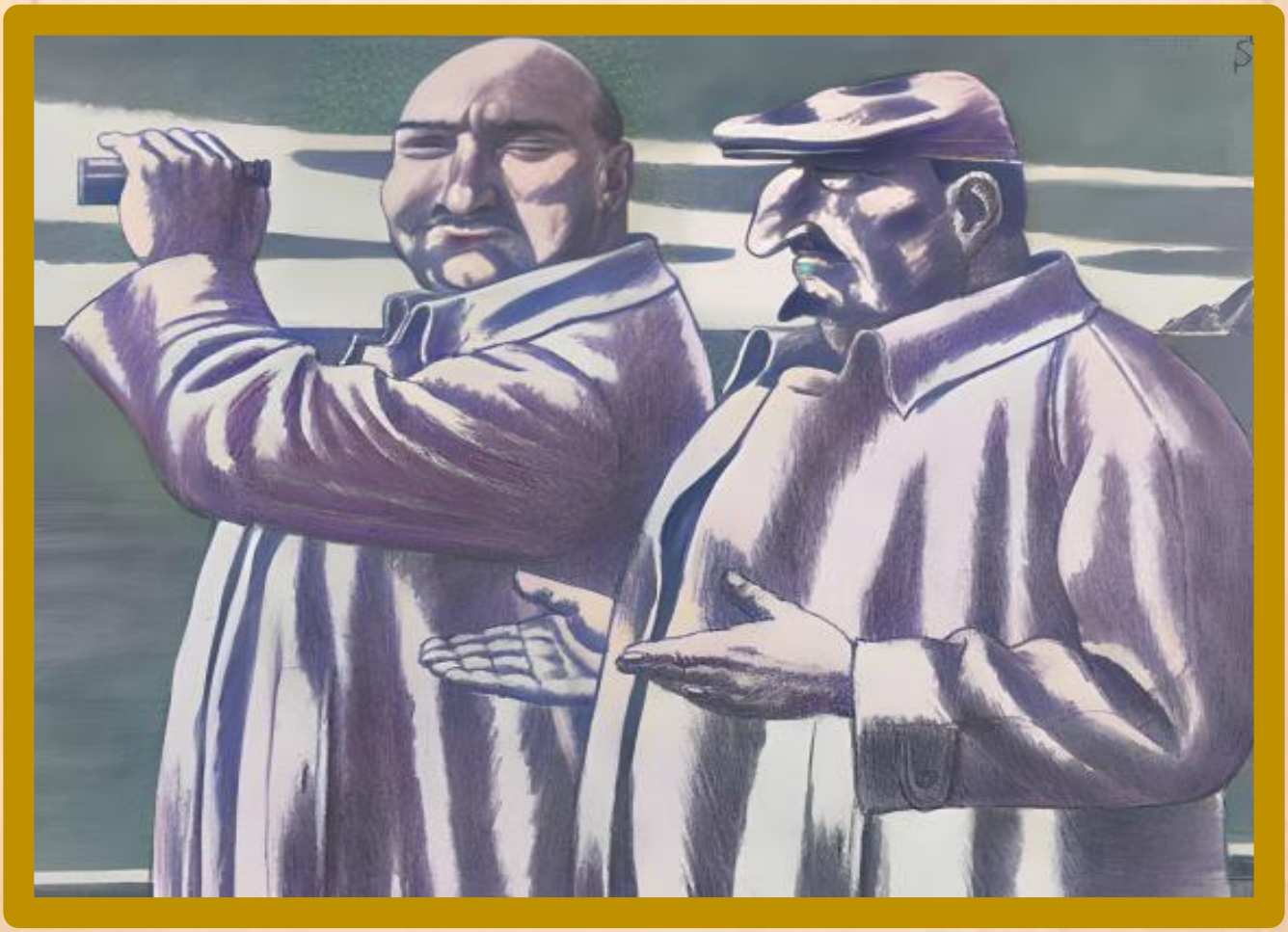
prosperous Germany. This optimism reflects a deeper faith in the nation's ability to overcome challenges, suggesting that even amid criticism, there is a prevailing hope for a brighter future driven by economic growth and improved public safety. I wanted to share an intriguing article I came across in the morning news, which detailed

the collapse of negotiations between the government and England in Switzerland. The discussions had centered around a critical request from the German government, urging England to ease its stringent immigration policies that currently prohibit Jewish individuals from migrating to the English Protectorate in

Palestine.
This breakdown in talks highlights the complexities and tensions surrounding immigration issues during this period, particularly in relation to the plight of Jewish refugees seeking safety and a new home.
The implications of such negotiations are profound, as they not only reflect the political

landscape of the time but also the humanitarian crises that were unfolding, making it essential to consider the broader context of these discussions.

In response to the situation, the English Delegation proposed a plan for universal immigration to a yet-to-be-determined site in Eastern Africa,



suggesting the possibility of establishing a new Jewish Homeland. However, this offer was met with immediate rejection from the Zionist groups present at the conference, who found the proposal unacceptable.

The article further highlighted that, as a contingency to this outright dismissal, both

the German and Zionist delegations took proactive measures by appealing to the American Embassy in Switzerland.
Their request was for the United States to increase the annual quota of Jewish immigrants permitted to enter the country, emphasizing the urgency of the matter as many German Jewish

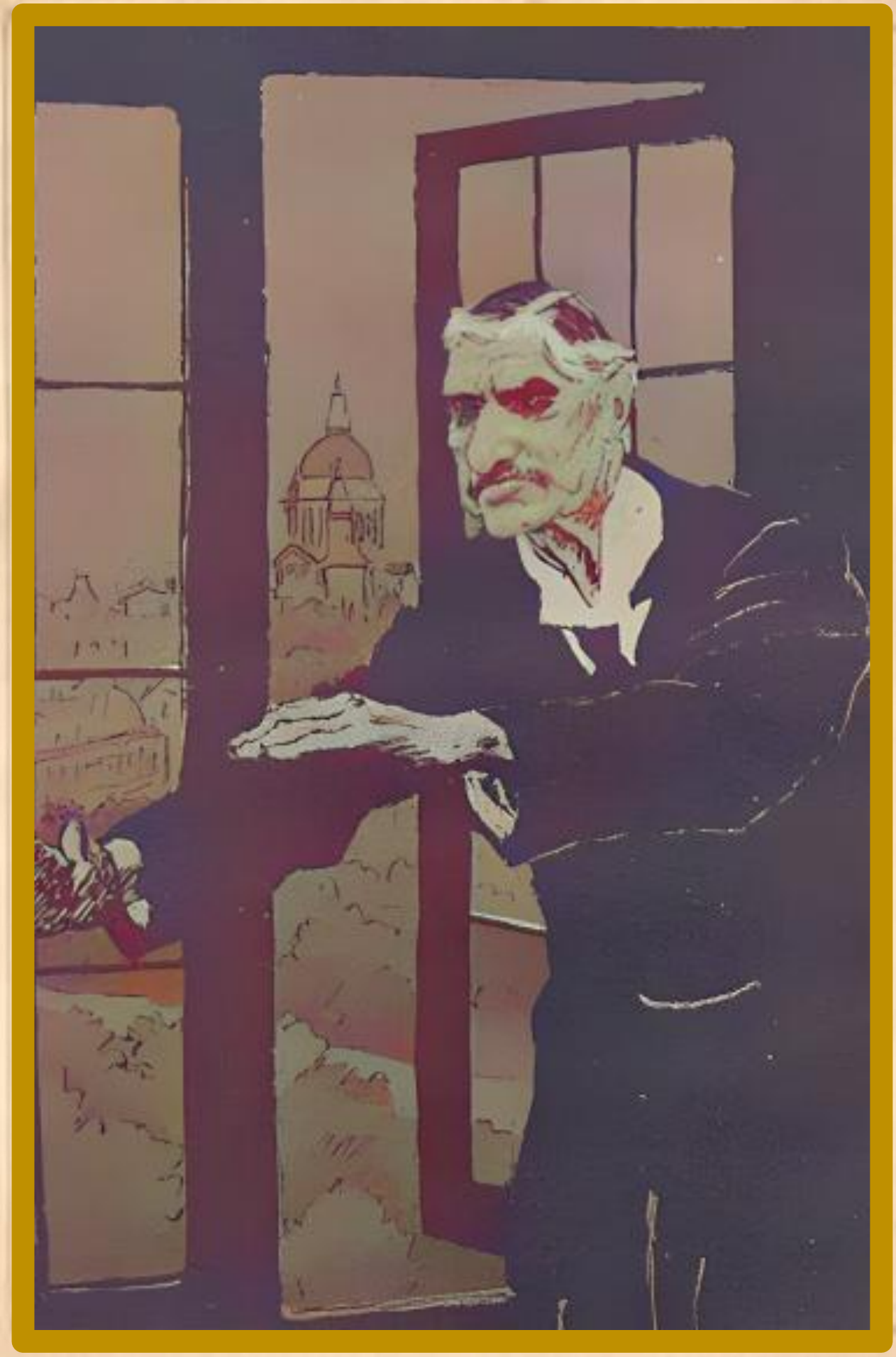
families had established familial and business ties in the US
This plea underscored the desperate need for a safe haven amid rising tensions in Europe, illustrating the critical intersection of immigration policy and humanitarian need during a tumultuous period.
The article wrapped up by highlighting the

significant backing that the German Delegation enjoys from the public, alongside endorsements from various International Zionist Organizations and esteemed members of the Jewish Community in Berlin, who participated as delegates at the conference.
This support underscores a collective

disappointment regarding the global indifference towards the Jewish people's aspiration to return to their ancestral homelands. Furthermore, the article pointedly addressed the German Government's policy of repatriating foreigners after decades of what has been termed illegal immigration, which has

placed a considerable strain on the nation's social welfare system. The juxtaposition of these issues reveals a pressing need for a more compassionate and responsive approach to the historical and contemporary challenges faced by the Jewish community, as well as a reevaluation of immigration policies

that impact the social fabric of the nation. Tonight, I will embark on an exciting journey, departing for Switzerland aboard the night express train. This initial leg of my adventure will whisk me through the picturesque landscapes of the Swiss countryside, where the serene beauty of the mountains and valleys will serve as a perfect



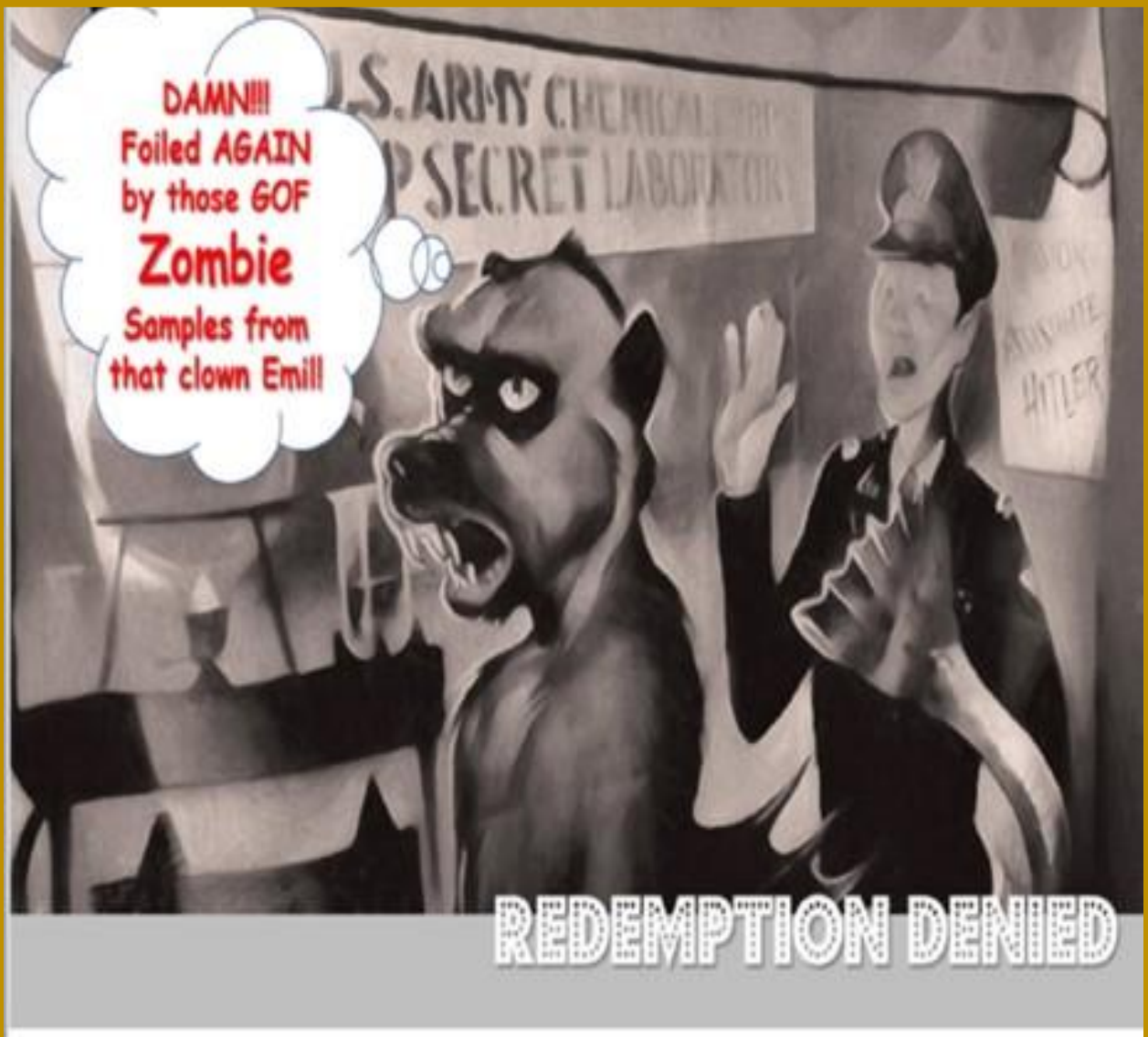
backdrop for my thoughts.
Upon reaching Switzerland, I will transfer to another train that will take me further south to Southern Italy. There, I have arranged for passage on a cargo ship that will ultimately carry me back to Cuba, with a stopover in Portugal.
This unique route not only promises to be an

unforgettable experience but also allows me to embrace the diverse cultures and stunning vistas along the way, making this journey a remarkable chapter in my life.

I plan to arrive in Havana by the end of May, and I would greatly appreciate it if you could inform my landlady about my upcoming arrival.

It is important for me to ensure that she is aware of my schedule so that any necessary preparations can be made in advance. This will help facilitate a smooth transition upon my arrival, allowing me to settle in comfortably and start my time in Havana on the right foot.

Emil,
23 April 1940
Hamburg Harbor



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